

my sons have sinned—this did Job continually." In the fifth chapter of Ephesians fathers are commanded to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Note that this obligation is distinctly laid upon the fathers. One of the most effective ways that fathers can have in meeting this obligation is the way of the family altar. It means much to the children of the home to have the father gather them about the family altar each day, to read to them a message from God's word, and by an earnest prayer to lead them into the very secret of His presence. There are many here today who could rise up and testify that the family altar was one of the great moulding influences in their lives.

Fathers, if there is no family altar in your home will you not erect one today? It will probably take a great deal of grace and courage, but God will give these to you if you will only try. If you do not know just how to begin, invite your pastor to come and help you to start. Nothing could give him more genuine joy than just such an invitation.

(c) In a Christian home we would expect to see the word of God definitely taught to the children. "These words—shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." This command was given to fathers and mothers and it is impossible for them to avoid the responsibility or to thrust it over on the Sunday-school and the Church.

A few years ago the mother of a sixteen-year-old daughter was criticising the Sunday-school in her church very sharply. These are practically her exact words as they come back to my mind: "The Sunday-schools of today are very inefficient. When I was sixteen years old I knew the Shorter Catechism and whole chapters in the Bible. But I do not believe that M— knows a single question in the Catechism or a single verse in the Bible. The Sunday-schools are very inefficient." It never seemed to occur to her that she was in any way responsible for her daughter's lamentable state of ignorance. She laid the whole responsibility upon the Church and the Sunday-school. Some weeks ago a graduate of one of our well-known Presbyterian colleges told me that one of the puzzling problems of his college life was to understand how it was possible for sons of Presbyterian deacons and elders to grow up in these Presbyterian homes and to come to college as absolutely ignorant of the word of God as the majority of his classmates were. One day in the city of Atlanta an Egyptian called at my study and told me that he had become deeply interested in the Christian religion and that he wanted to unite with the Church. I naturally asked him what his religious faith had been up to that time and was surprised when he told me that he had never had any religion of any kind, for I had always been taught that everybody had some kind of religion. I then asked what was the religion of his father and mother. He replied: "I do not know anything about it. They belonged to a religious sect called Druses, but all Druses take an oath that they will not tell their children anything about their religion until they are thirty years old. I left Egypt before I was thirty, so they never told me anything about their religion." My first thought was that this was a very strange kind of religion and that these were very strange fathers and mothers. But on second thought I remembered that there are thousands of fathers in the Christian Church who are very much like these Druses fathers. They never tell their children anything about their religion. They never teach them the word of God. This is the reason why young men come from Christian homes to college absolutely ig-

norant of the Bible. Fathers, begin today and teach your children the word of God. They need it as a lamp to their feet and a light to their path as they take their journey through the world.

(d) In a Christian home the very atmosphere should be permeated by the teachings of the word of God and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Turn to Deut. 6:6-9 and see how forcefully this thought is brought out.

You may have a blessing at the table, you may have family prayers, and you may teach the Bible to your children, and yet you may not have an out and out Christian home. All of these exercises may be performed in a purely perfunctory manner. You may go through the forms of godliness and lack the power thereof. The atmosphere which pervades the home will, in the long run, count for more than all your formal teachings. Let your mind run back to the home in which you were brought up. Did you get your great life convictions from some set form of instruction which was given you or did you get them out of the atmosphere which you breathed in your home?

In the Christian home the principles of the teachings of Jesus should be the guiding principle of each life. Each member of the home should be taught that he must do his part in making the home just the kind of home in which Jesus will delight to dwell. When a stranger comes into such a home he will be compelled to say: "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Fathers, have you provided a Christian home for your children? If you have already done so will you not resolve today that by the help of God you will make it more Christian? If you have not done so, will you not begin today? You owe it to your children, you owe it to your God.

4. A father owes his children a Christian education. Practically all fathers recognize that they owe their children an education. But there are still multitudes of professing Christian men who do not seem to realize that they owe their children a Christian education. It is passing strange that fathers and mothers will bring up their children with the greatest care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord until they are sixteen or seventeen years of age, and then send them off to a school or college without the slightest inquiry into the religious influences of that school or college. As a result many of the boys and girls from our Christian homes are being sent to schools and colleges where their minds and morals are poisoned for life. I have seen one splendid young fellow after another go from Christian homes to such colleges and have seen them return utterly indifferent to religion. When you think of sending your child to college your first question ought to be: "What will be the moral and spiritual influences of that college on my child?" Fathers, you owe your children a Christian education.

5. A father owes it to his children to train them to attend the services and ordinances of God's house. That is precisely what multitudes of fathers and mothers in this book did for their children.

We have a significant touch in Exodus 12:26. God has been directing Moses concerning the observance of the sacrament of the Passover. In the twenty-sixth verse he says: "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say." Then follows the explanation of the Passover which they were to give to their children. Do you see the picture? The little children are present at this most holy

service of the Old Testament Church. Their hearts and minds are burning with questions concerning the meaning of the service. You and I would probably have told them to wait until they were a little older and could understand better these deep things of God. But that is not God's way. He directed that their questions should be answered clearly and explicitly.

Perhaps there is no service which so stirs the heart of little children as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There is no service concerning which they ask so many questions. What an opportunity this gives to parents to speak to the little ones about the love of Jesus and about their need of him. But the custom now is to send the children home before the Sacramental service begins. In fact, it has become the custom in towns and cities to send the children home every Sunday before the preaching service begins, and thus we are training up a generation of non-church goers.

You will find that the Old Testament saints took their children with them to the services of God's house and to the great religious festivals. You will find in the New Testament that when a father came into the Church he brought his entire household with him.

We have just one glimpse of the boy Jesus between his infancy and the time of his baptism at the age of thirty. Luke gives us this glimpse in the second chapter of his gospel. Joseph and Mary are going up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover and Jesus who is twelve years old is going with them. You remember how he was lost in the crowd and how they searched for him for hours and even days and found him in the temple. To Mary's question he replied: "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" (Am. R. V.)

In this picture we have an example for the fathers and mothers and children of today. Joseph and Mary took their child up to the services and ordinances of the house of God. The boy Jesus delighted to be in his Father's house. It is no wonder that it is said of Jesus so often in after years that he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as his custom was. He learned that custom when he was a child. There would be more people in our churches today if fathers and mothers would follow the example of Joseph and Mary. The question is often asked why men do not go to church. The chief reason is that their fathers and mothers never trained them to go to church and never taught them to love the house of God.

Fathers, are you leaving the Church of the living God out of the lives of your children? If so, they will have a right to rise up in after years and reproach you for your negligence, for the services of God's house are among the greatest influences for good that can ever come into the life of a child. Go back over your own life for a moment and think of all that the Church has meant to your own soul. Will you rob your child of these gracious influences?

These are some of the things which a father owes his children. As we who are fathers stand face to face with these obligations our hearts sink within us. We know that we have come infinitely short of being what God wants us to be and of doing what God wants us to do. Let this be a day of penitence and humble confession to God on our part. Let it also be a day of rededication and reconsecration when we shall make the holy resolve that, if God will help us, we will try anew to meet these obligations, and to teach our children "that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice."